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Introduction

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Communicating Order Policing Society

Introduction

Philipp Müller

Police practice operates in a setting of communications: interrogations have to be minuted; reports require drafting and submission; names need to be listed; and statistical calculations must be updated. Police authorities are keen to learn and implement new technologies and means of communication in order to improve and facilitate the internal communication of their administrative apparatus. Additionally, the police require the means to promote their institutional performance. Put simply, policing society is inextricably interlinked with various acts of communication[1]. Against this backdrop, the contributions of this issue focus on the different efforts of police to effectively communicate with « the policed », thereby ensuring peace, order and, ultimately, the execution of power.

Jakob Zollmann explores in his study to what extent and under which circumstances German colonial police forces succeeded in effectively carrying out their policing tasks. As his analysis compellingly shows, the space for manoeuvring was rather limited for the colonial police, and the impact of their actions mediated and diverted in many ways. In contrast to the sweeping notions of state power formulated in the offices of the Imperial metropolis, the practice of policing in the colonies could not but rely on native Africans and their help and support, given the required specific local knowledge and understanding of the difficult Nama/Damara-language. In the end, the mission of German colonial police, deployed to 'normalise' statehood in the German colonies, proved illusionary.

Policing in the metropolises of the British and German Empires is at the centre of the study by Anja Johansen. Johansen compares the different procedures put in place in London and Berlin to deal with complaints concerning police malpractice, an under-investigated field in police history. Remarkably, the London Metropolitan police managed to fashion itself as a responsive and disciplined institutional body, a body that was committed to the public and acted in accordance with the law, even if the alleged « gentle Bobby »[2] performed less gently than generally perceived by the wider urban populace. In comparison, the Berlin police forces, lacking such differentiated and sophisticated approach towards police malpractice, antagonised the general public and prompted criticism of all parties across the political spectrum. Broadly speaking, the *Schutzmannschaft* persistently defended any use of violence to enforce law and order and thus the authority cemented the notion of the bully and

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1 Cf. Becker (2004); Caplan (2001); Habermas (2003); Lüdtke, Becker (1997); Lüdtke, Müller (2005); Schwerhoff (1999, 2011).

2 Emsley (1992, 2005).

aggressive *Schutzmann*. As a result, any attempt of the authority to effectively deal with police malpractice was tarnished beforehand. However, it is also worth noting that, in contrast to its English counterpart, the policing practice of the *Schutzmannschaft* generally lacked the notion of proportional use of coercive means in the course of law enforcement.

As Berlin's police forces embarked on the public investigation of crimes, the position of the authority significantly differed. Philipp Müller presents an in depth analysis of the « Berlin 'Jack the Ripper' » Case, investigating the press policy of the Criminal Investigation Department and its repercussions in the public arena of Imperial Berlin. Similarly to the original Jack the Ripper case, the Berlin police never caught the perpetrator. However, Scotland Yard's restrictive attitude towards the press prompted London's journalists to fabricate the famous Jack the Ripper legend, whereas the proactive and inclusive press policy of the Criminal investigation department succeeded in silencing the ultimate failure of the public manhunt. The failure of police and public efforts notwithstanding, the public police investigations went with a new encounter between the police forces and « the policed » as amply illustrated by the « Berlin 'Jack the Ripper' » case. The police and « the many » jointly attempted to rectify the wrong done by the perpetrator ; concomitantly, they negotiated about their say and performance in the transforming public sphere of Imperial Berlin.

Whereas the authors of these three studies differently weigh the comparative as well as transnational dimensions of police history, they all share one particular focus : the history of German police in the Imperial period. The years from 1871 until 1914 witnessed significant political and social change, and, certainly, the transformation of German society did not come to a halt at the gates of German police authorities. During the Imperial period German police forces were confronted with diverse challenges, challenges that came in different forms and urged the police authorities to change in one or the other way. The German unification itself had already legally constrained the political powers of Prussian political and military elites, thereby curtailing the reach of their political machinations in the newly established political entity[3]. About ten years later, the *Preußische Oberverwaltungsgericht* stipulated that the police had not say in aesthetic question ; its main task being defined the safeguarding of public security and safety ; the *Kreuzbergurteil* undermined the encompassing and comprehensive remit underpinned by the concept of *Polizey*[4]. Although the notorious institutional affiliation of the army and police[5] – in addition to the military fabric of German police – remained a persistent feature[6], the cooperation as well as the institutional ties of army and police weakened[7]. The colonial experiment is a case in point : in South West Africa a civilian governor commanded the military and headed the police inspectorate - an unprecedented institution that prompted much debate among the contemporaries in the metropolis[8]. Furthermore, for the police forces, the ambition to transform the recently carved out colonial possessions into a territory of Empire produced a *situa-*

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3 Lüdtke (1997).

4 Foucault (1981) ; Lüdtke (1982, 1989) ; Reinke (1993).

5 Funk (1986) ; Reinke (1991) ; cf. Lüdtke (1992) ; Reinke (1993).

6 Lüdtke (1982, 1989) ; Emsley (1999).

7 Funk (1986) ; Spencer (1985, 1992) ; Johansen (2005).

8 Cf. article by Jakob Zollmann in this issue of *Crime, Histoire et Sociétés / Crime, History & Societies*.

tion coloniale that did not lack its own imminent challenges. Finally, during the Imperial period the German society itself was subject to change. In the course of economic transition and urban agglomeration, emerging cities and new urban centres went with unheard forms of sociability and produced novel tasks and required new roles for the police[9]. Last but not least, the transforming media landscape in Germany press went with the establishing of a wider urban public. Consequently, police practice became subject to public scrutiny, resulting in severe public criticism for this authority[10]. Put succinctly, politics changed gear and society transformed: the police was urged to respond to these social and political changes, on top of having to consider how the police could contribute to these developments. It is this context that is worth-while to probe, namely the interdependent interlocking of the communicating order and the policing of society.

« Communicating order, policing society » was the theme of the *20th Colloquium for Police History* co-jointly organised with and staged at the *German Historical Institute London* in July 2009. On this occasion Dr Anja Johansen and Dr Jakob Zollmann presented and discussed their studies with various experts of modern police history in Great Britain and Germany. I owe many thanks to Professor Andreas Gestrich, Director of the *German Historical Institute London*, for his cooperation and support of the conference. I also owe many thanks to Professor Clive Emsley and Professor Alf Lüdtke for their advice while designing and organising the 20th colloquium. For their financial support of the conference, I would like to thank the *German Historical Institute London*, the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Polizeigeschichte e.V.*, and the *German History Society*.

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9 Spencer (1990); Jessen (1991); Lindenberger (1992); Reinke (1991); Fraunholz (2000); Müller (2010).

10 Roth (1997); Müller (2005); Johansen (2009).

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